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Sen. Johnson requests legislation to protect Michigan residents following information theft at ChoicePoint

LANSING – Legislation requiring companies to notify Michigan residents when their personal, credit or medical information has been stolen or misused, will be introduced by state Sen. Shirley Johnson in the coming weeks.

“This is timely and important legislation made necessary by advances, misuse and shortcomings in technology,” said Johnson, R-Troy. “We need this law on the books to help protect Michigan residents from fraud resulting from the theft and misuse of private and personal information.”

Proposed by Johnson, the legislation would require companies such as ChoicePoint, Inc. to notify Michigan residents when their personal, credit and medical information has been stolen or misused.

Last week ChoicePoint, a database company operating in Georgia, announced that the personal information of 145,000 United States residents was stolen in October, 2004. The company maintains and sells background files which are generated from information gleaned from public and private records.

ChoicePoint recently notified approximately 35,000 Californians of the theft of their personal information. Currently, California is the only state to require companies to notify affected individuals when their information is stolen.

Attorney General Mike Cox announced that ChoicePoint will be sending-out letters, later this week, informing approximately 2,300 Michigan residents that their personal information may have been compromised.

“Michigan has passed several ‘identity theft’ laws to create restrictions on the use and dissemination of personal information, in recent years,” Johnson said. “This bill would require companies, who fail in the protection of consumer information, to notify affected individuals when files have been stolen and give them a chance to take action to protect themselves from identity theft.”

Johnson is also working on a legislative resolution calling upon congress to take action to more tightly regulate the use, dissemination and protection of personal information, nationwide.

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